

THE Christian History;

Containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival
of Religion in *England Scotland and America.*

To be publish'd Weekly.

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Having at present finish'd our Accounts of the *Revival* of Religion in NEW-ENGLAND at the *present Day* before Mr. *Whitefield's* Arrival in 1740; until a sufficient Number of fresh Accounts come to our Hands; we would entertain our Readers with other Matters. And we cannot but think that the following Extract is exceeding suitable for the present Times. It is a Chapter contained in a valuable and famous Treatise intituled *The Kingdom of GOD among Men*, printed at *London* in 1679, and composed by the Rev. Mr. JOHN CORBET, one of the greatest and most learned as well as pious of the Nonconformists in his Day, as we learn from his Funeral Sermon preached by the Rev. and famous Mr. *Baxter*, and from Dr. *Calamy's* Account of the ejected Ministers.

C H A P. XV.

The Enmity of the World against Godliness, and the Calumnies and Reproaches cast upon it considered.

THE security and increase of true Religion is a matter of no small difficulty. The Enmity against it is general and perpetual in the first race of Mankind it brake forth even to Blood, and throughout all Ages it hath been propagated, and that with great rage, as well within as without the Pale of the visible Church. The adverse World knows not the new Nature what it is, for it knowes not God, whose Image it is. The World is not only alienated from the Life of God, but opposite to it by the antipathy of the carnal Life, and so not only wants the true relish; but hath a strong distaste of the divine and heavenly Nature.

‘ Moreover true Christianity is a Light, by which all Things
‘ that are reproved, are made manifest ; and the World that
‘ lives in Sin and loves Darkness, hates the Light, by which
‘ it is condemned, not only with an Hatred of Averstation,
‘ but of hostile Persecution.

‘ Nevertheless, the unregenerate Sort of Men in general,
‘ cannot and would not abandon all Sense of Religion, which
‘ is so deeply imprinted in human Nature, and the Form
‘ whereof may be acceptable even to corrupt Nature. Where-
‘ fore they own the Name, while they hate the Thing ; and
‘ keep up a Shew and Form thereof, while they deny the
‘ Truth and Power. And having a false Apprehension of
‘ Christ they adore him, while they trample upon his present
‘ Members, that really bear his Image ; and having a false
‘ Idea of Godliness, they honour the Memory of the Saints
‘ of former Ages, while they vilify those of their own Times,
‘ in whom Godliness really exists : which shews, that if Christ
‘ and the former Saints were now on the Earth to appear
‘ what they were indeed, they would be no less hated and
‘ scorned than the Faithful that are now living.

‘ The manifold Ways of Destruction and Misery wherein
‘ the Wicked walk, tho’ contradictory to each other, do all
‘ conspire in this Enmity ; and Godliness is put to conflict
‘ not with one Sort of Enemies, but with the various corrupt
‘ Parties of the divided carnal World. Yet worldly Interests
‘ often make their Advantages of Christianity, and have their
‘ Designs upon it, and complicate themselves with it in some
‘ external and accidental Engagements for a Season, and then
‘ the Enmity is restrained. And not a few, that fall short of
‘ Regeneration, may be so illuminated and wrought upon, as
‘ not only to cease from Malignancy and Hostility against it,
‘ but to promote and strengthen its external Interests. But
‘ for all this, the Serpentine Nature hath hitherto been more
‘ predominant in this lower World, and God’s Kingdom hath
‘ had far greater Opposition, than Assistance from the Powers
‘ thereof.

‘ Now we are noting the Injury and Despight that is done
‘ to Godliness, the Calumnies and Reproaches heaped on the
‘ serious Professors of it to render them hateful and contemp-
‘ tible, requires some Animadversion. Their Adversaries
‘ set them forth as Proud, Froward, Stubborn, False, Rash,
‘ Fierce, Petulant, Sullen, Fanatical, Hypocritical, Censo-
‘ rious,

* rious, Pragmatical, Unruly, Schismatical, Seditious, Un-
* peaceable, Presumptuous, Selfish, and such like.

* If we would judge rightly of these Imputations, we are to
* mind many Things, *viz.* The Intrusion of Hypocrites, the
* Multitude of half Converts, the great Weakness of Grace, and
* Defect of Wisdom in the greater Part of sincere Christians,
* and the Imperfections of the best and chiefest of them. It
* is further to be considered that Faults real or seeming, are
* more remarkable in strict Professors than in any others, as
* Spots in a white Garment; also that the common Malig-
* nity will aggravate the same above Measure; likewise that
* the Things they are charged with (were they truly charged)
* are not peculiarly theirs, but the Corruptions of the World
* in general; and that some Degrees thereof are found in all,
* in whom human Weakness is found, and that they are less
* and in a lower Degree in this Party of Men than in any
* other. Add hereunto that the Faults of some are commonly
* objected against all, and the Sins of Men not yet made per-
* fect, are cast upon that holy and perfect Way, which con-
* demns those Sins, and hath broken the Dominion of them.

* Moreover, when it is undeniable that this Sort of Men
* in general have renounced palpable Dishonesty, Injustice,
* filthy Lewdness, Wantonness, Intemperance, Luxury and
* other gross Pollutions of the World, they are burdened (ac-
* cording to the true Method of Calumny) with Matter
* of Suspicion or evil Surmise, as Hypocrisy, Self-conceited-
* ness, Fancialness and secret Pride, Things mostly belong-
* ing to the hidden Man of the Heart; or with spiritual
* Wickedness, as Envy, Malice, Bitterness, Vain-glory, Am-
* bition, Self-admiration and Contempt of others, Things of
* more close and covert Nature, and as not easily proved, so
* not easily disproved where they are objected; or with the
* ambiguous Charge of Schism, Faction, Turbulency, Singu-
* larity, Peevishness, Perverseness, Obstinacy; which oppo-
* site Parties are continually casting upon each other; Faults
* and Duties, Virtues and Vices happening to be called by
* these Names. And in this Method of Accusation, the In-
* nocent are sooner injured than cleared, and Slanderers do
* their Work, for the Reproaches are boldly cast abroad, and
* something sticks.

* But notwithstanding all the Obloquy and Calumny, the
* whole World may be challenged to produce an Instance of

any Sort or Sect of Men, that have exceeded or equalled the serious Professors of the true Christianity in Things honest, and just, and comely, and useful, and praise-worthy. It must not be expected, but that during their imperfect State Obliquities and Aberrations will be found more or less in them, as they are more or less remote from Perfection. But if true Honesty and Virtue be a Reality and not an empty Name, and if it be not perished out of the World, it exists and resides in them.

Howbeit in this Way there are inevitable Occasions of stumbling, not given but taken, and such fall thereat, as do err in their Hearts, and have not known God's Ways. The Practice of true Piety lying out of the common Road, is misjudg'd as a kind of humorous Singularity.

To speak feelingly of divine Things, seems Folly or meer Fancy to them, who have no Knowledge or Taste thereof in themselves.

To express with Zeal or Vigour such Things as seem to others incredible, tho' they be most true and excellent, is taken for Madness.

Tenderness of Conscience, Strictness of Life, Fervour of Devotion, Mortification and Heavenly-mindedness, is by Sensualists, Formalists, and carnal Politicians, judging by their own Measure, taken for Hypocrisy, designing the Applause of Men, or some Emirancy and Advancement in a Party, or some other Self-Interest.

A pious Regard to the lesser as well as the greater Commands of the Law, and a Dread of despising the least Commandment, is commonly esteemed Peevishnes and needless Precisenes.

To distinguish between the holy and profane, the zealous and lukewarm, the carnal and spiritual in the visible Church, and to judge of both Sorts as they are, is a great Offence to the World, for which the Religious are thought to be Proud, Fosters, Despisers of others, Uncharitable, Cenforous; and Formalists are magnified against them for their large Charity towards all, which is indeed no Charity, but Indiferency in Religion, not seldom accompanied with Bitterness towards the Godly.

To speak as the Scripture doth of a peculiar People, and as Christ himself, of the fewness of God's chosen among the many outwardly called, is accounted the confining of Godliness.

• Godliness to a Party, and the fancying of themselves to be
• the only People of God. Now such Arrogance is justly
• charged on those that place Religion in narrow Opinions,
• and Platforms, and Methods of their own choosing, and
• judge of all Men as they are nearer or farther from them :
• yet nothing is surer than that God hath a peculiar People,
• who are comparatively a small Number distinguished from
• the World by his own Mark, which is no other than his
• own Image in Righteousnes and true Holines.

• To discern a laborious, lively, faithful Ministry from that
• which is lazy, lifeles and deceitful, and to regard the one
• and the other accordingly, to note the ignorant, foolish,
• profane and scandalous of that Function, *to condemn a vile*
Person, and to honour them that fear the Lord, to take Notice
• of the Serpentine Seed, and to turn away from such, to
• abhor Impiety, and to have no Fellowship with the Wicked
• in their evil Deeds, provokes an evil Generation that are
• hereby reproved & judged ; and they raise an Outcry against
• the Godly as factious, unsociable, Despisers of Government,
• Makers of Parties, and Enemies to Peace.

• To examine the Doctrines, Precepts, Traditions, and
• Customs of Men by God's Word, to use all just Means to
• discern his Will, and to choose to obey God rather than
• Men, when their Commands are contrary to his, is reviled
• for proud Perversenes, Contempt of ancient Customs, and
• the Authority of Superiours, Disobedience to Kings and
• Laws.

• To be zealous for God's Honour, and the Purity of Religion, to be earnest and active in stopping the Course of Sin, and promoting Piety and the Means of Salvation, and
• to be concerned for God's Interest in the World more than
• the common Sort are, make the Religious to seem prag-
• matical, turbulent, and unpeaceable.

• Not to run into the common Excess of Riot, nor to
• comply with mad Mirth and Jollity, offensive Gallantry,
• or any Extravagancy that is in Fashion, is accounted Stoical
• Superciliousnes and Morosity.

• Strictness of Profession, Seriousness and necessary Preciseness of Conversation seems to many to be the same Thing
• with Phariseism, wherewith the most conscientious are
• commonly most reproached, and so the hateful Name of
• Christ's worst Enemies is cast upon his true and faithful
• Followers. Wherefore

Wherefore it is worth the while to note who and what they were. It is evident from the Gospel-History, that the *Pharisees* were a strict Sect, and in great Reputation for seeming Holiness, no Separatists from the *Jewish Church*, but of chiefest Sway therein, and of great Esteem among the Rulers. They little cared for the ordering and Government of the Heart, and placed Perfection in outward Works, and in Rituals more than Morals, and chiefly in the Ceremonies of their own devising, and the Traditions of the Elders, and in Zeal for the *Corban* or the Church's Treasure, and to these Things they made the weightiest Duties of the Law give Place. They wore broad Phylacteries, and affected a proud Reservedness and formal Gravity. Those Fastings, Prayers and Alms-Deeds, that should have been done in secret, they made a Show of openly to be seen of Men. They would be counted *Rabbies*, and own'd for absolute teaching Masters and Leaders of the People, and would have all subject to their Dictates. And they were Maligners and Opposers of the Power of Godliness, and Persecutors of the true *Israelites* to maintain their own Institutes and Interest. Now for our Part we have no need, nor Mind to vindicate the true Off-spring of such Forefathers. It concerns all Christians, as Christ warn'd the Disciples to beware of this *Leaven*. But the Truth is, something of Phariseism may be found among some of all Parties, as Self-confidence, Vain-glory, Self-praise, Cen-soriousness, Arrogance, Partiality, perverseness of Con-science, or straining at Gnats and swallowing of Camels. And peradventure, those that most object it to others, may be most deeply infected with it themselves; but however, it concerns all sorts to beware of it, and do as much as is possible to purge it out from among them, and every Christian should strive to keep himself from any Smack of it, seeing it was so unsavoury to Christ.

‘ It is thus very discernable from the manifold Misapprehensions of the Way it self, how Godliness falls under the hard Thoughts and Speeches of the mistaken World. But *Wisdom is justified of her Children.* And if Godliness it self by Misapprehension become a Rock of Offence, no wonder the World is scandalized at the Hypocrisy of false Pretenders, and at the real Faults and Weakness of sincere Professors. But Christ hath said, *Blessed is he that is not offended in me.*’ Un-

• Undoubtedly the making of an higher Profession doth not
• exempt any from a just Conviction and Reproof. That
• Hypocrites should be detected, and the scandalous Faults
• even of sincere Christians noted, is the Interest of true
• Piety. And Charity both towards them that give Offence,
• and towards them that take it to their Hurt, requireth such
• Discovery. The Godly lay to Heart no Evils more, than
• the Scandals of Professors; and they know they are most
• concerned to take heed, *lest any Root of Bitterness bearing*
Gall or Wormwood should spring up amorg them. And thote
• that sin before all, their Discipline is to rebuke before all,
• that others may fear. But the great Mischief is, that some
• so speak and write of Hypocrites and Offences, as to re-
• proach Godlineſt it ſelf, and bring the Profession of it into
• Disgrace.

• When they take Notice of any Thing amiss in Men pro-
• fessing Godlineſt, whether the Matter of Fact be true or
• false, or the Scandal be in Reality or Appearance only,
• they preſently ſay these are your Professors, they are all
• ſuch, and the whole Pack affords no better.

• The real or ſeeming Hypocrify, Pride, Covetouneſt, Un-
• righteouneſt, Uncharitableneſt, Selfiſhneſt of ſome is caſt
• upon all.

• From ſome Instances of Aberration they argue againſt a
• godly Tenor of Converſation, and deny Sincerity where
• they ſee a falling ſhort of Perfection.

• They diſparage a ſerious and circumſpect Course of Life,
• by pretending it may be but a meer Guife or Shew, there
• may be lurking Vices, and they who have ſcaped groſs Sen-
• ſuality may be guilty of ſpiritual Sins, as Pride and Envy;
• and fo they ground their Detraction upon Suppoſitions and
• Surmifes of what may be, tho' not appearing.

• They inveigh againſt Hypocrify in that Manner, which
• hardens the Vicious in their Debauchery; and they incou-
• rage Libertines in Idleneſt and excess of Vanity, by telling
• them, that the Preciſians may do worse.

• Those godly Exercises that lie out of the common Road
• (as to instance in holy Conference) they bring into Con-
• tempt, by objecting an unſeasonable and prepoſterous Use
• thereof, or the Impertinency and Weakneſt of ſome therein.

• They censure inordinate Transports of Zeal, & Whim-
• ſies in Religion more bitterly than Lewdneſtles, Outrages,
• groſs Impieties, and daring Wickedneſt of diſſolute Perfons.

‘ They will burden the sober-minded, that are zealous for their God, with the inexcusable Madness of some intemperate Zealots.

‘ The Failings of the Religious they aggravate above Measure, and particularly some passionate Disorders, that are commonly complexional, and have less of the Will, and consequently of sinful Malignity in them, than many Sins that make lesser Noise, and raise less Clamour: and they magnify the Eveness, Moderation, Mildness and other Humanities of loose or lukewarm Persons for the true Christian Spirit.

‘ They upbraid the Godly with their solemn Confessions and Aggravations of Sin before the Lord, and with their Acknowledgment and bewailing of such Scandals before the World, as have been given by some among them; as also with their publick Testimonies against Errors and Corruptions, that have risen in their Times; and so they reproach them for their Humility, Sincerity, and Impartiality in abasing themselves and giving Glory to God, and condemning Sin where-ever they find it.

‘ They scoff at those that speak of Communion with God, spiritual Experiences, Desertions, and the like Matters; and use in Scorn scriptural Words and Phrases, and other holy Expressions used by the Religious; and profane the Terms of *Holy, Godly, Saint, Sanctified*, by the Use thereof in scandalous Ironies, and so they make Sport for profane Men, and harden them in their Irreligion.

‘ They would render holy Things contemptible by nothing, some little Oversight and Indecencies (mostly involuntary) in those that perform the same, as perhaps in the Preacher’s Tone or Gesture.

‘ And to say the Truth, it is one of the easiest Things in the World for licentious Wits to play upon the most serious and sacred Things, and to make the most acceptable Service of God and his choicest Servants, seem ridiculous. These are some of the many vile and wretched Ways of disgracing true Religion: And I will add one more, to wit, that Madness of Opposition, on what Side soever it be, which to make a different Party odious, will not fear to expose Godliness it self to the Contempt and Scorn of them that scorn all religious Parties.

To be finished in our next.